

**REPORT TO THE GENERAL BOARD  
AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**THE NATIONAL CONVOCATION**

**TIMOTHY M. JAMES  
ASSOCIATE GENERAL MINISTER AND ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY  
OF THE NATIONAL CONVOCATION**

To Moderator, Regina Morton, General Minister and President, Sharon Watkins, Members of the General Board, Colleagues of the Cabinet and to this General Assembly;

We are the National Convocation, a presence and leaven within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), recognizing and preparing leaders for the empowerment of African American congregations. We are the instrumentality and the forum for the discussion of pertinent issues related to the Black Church and the African American community. We endeavor to provide leadership training, congregational resources, program promotion, fellowship and inspiration to our constituents. We are a critical presence to enable the actuality of our Merger Agreement and to facilitate the denomination to live into our Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racism initiative and imperative.

We greet you on behalf of more than 370 congregations and 400 pastors and ministers who are not ashamed to own the name Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We are in the midst of the movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. It is our Mission to be and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, witnessing, loving and serving from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth. It is also our Vision to be a faithful growing church that demonstrates true community, deep Christian Spirituality and a passion for Justice.

We give God praise for the faithful leadership of our immediate-past president, Rev. Dr. Dale Braxton, the Board of Trustees, the Local Arrangements Committee chaired by Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont, our Administrative Assistant, Doris Speaks along with the 500 registered participants at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Biennial Session of the National Convocation last summer in Houston, Texas. Our theme was "...Yet, I Will Rejoice!" We did rejoice with great preaching, singing, learning, sharing and celebrating our lay leaders with special awards. We had a time to remember. We were truly made welcome and blessed with southern hospitality, Texas style.

We are filled with anticipation looking ahead to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Session of the National Convocation taking place in Columbus, Ohio next July 24-27, 2014. Our president, Rev. Patricia Maples, of Dallas, Texas is leading the way for us as we serve under the theme, "Be Still And Know." Sister Jackie Bunch is our Local Arrangements Committee Chairperson and is giving critical leadership as we seek to move the Biennial Session deeper and higher in mission and ministry.

As a Board, we have seriously considered the issues relating to the African American community, particularly in this past election year. We are encouraged and also challenged by the re-election of the first African American president, Barrack Hussein Obama. We pray for our president, his family, his safety, and that he be blessed with wisdom, knowledge and compassion as he leads these United States of America. We have also given serious attention and response to the sacred and faithful discussions around inclusion and welcome to the Table as God welcomes us. We genuinely care for the wholeness of the church.

We congratulate North American Pacific Asian Disciples, the Office of Hispanic Ministries and the General Assembly for your intentionality on working with youth and young adult ministries. We are endeavoring to put for the same emphasis. Our youth and young adults have gifts and contributions to offer the church now and should be at the table and in all parts of the programming of the church. Our young people not only help to keep us young but also enable us to keep up with social media and the proper use thereof.

We have been in full cooperation with Disciples Home Missions in the search process to fill the vacancy in the Director of Christian Education Office, when we lost Rev. Billye Pinkston Bridges. We are praying for two of our major congregations who are in transition with the retirement of Bishop T. Garrott Benjamin and the retirement of Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas. Light of the World Christian Church in Indianapolis and Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church in Memphis have called new pastors Rev. Dr. David Hampton and Rev. Dr. J. Lawrence Turner, respectively. We pray for their continued leadership and support in the life of the denomination.

We have recognized appreciated Rev. Dr. Norman Reed, retiring manager for the Greenwood Cemetery of Nashville, Incorporated. He and his wife May leave a legacy of leadership in Nashville. Bro. Dwayne Bell fills the managerial position and we are seeing a new look at the cemetery as well. We recently dedicated the new mausoleum and we are remodeling our three sites in the city in an effort to be more attractive and competitive.

A few highlights over the past two year include the Biennial Session of course, but also the installation of my oldest brother, Rev. Eugene W. James, Jr. as Regional Minister of the Christian Church in Michigan. Another highlight is the Miracle on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street in the Pacific Southwest Region at the United Christian where Rev. Dr. Mildred Butler is pastor. A miracle day is a wonderful way to get your congregation and region to work close together. My final highlight is the Young Preachers Academy at Atlanta, GA. This is where you young preachers meet and network. We have been blessed to be a part of this work and look forward to working more. This is a most wonderful opportunity for leadership development. In 2012 we witnessed two iconic figures of the National Convocation make their heavenly transition, Dr. Billye Pinkston Bridges and Dr. Raymond E. Brown, understandably their memories remain precious with us.

Respectfully  
Timothy M. James  
Administrative Secretary

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The General Board has reviewed Report No. 1315 from The National Convocation. The report is submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and discussion. No action is required. (Discussion time 12 minutes)